



Profile

Responsible for the educational needs of children in 248 schools across the county

Covering 139 primary and 36 secondary schools, located from Nuneaton in the North, to Shipston on Stour in the South

80,000 computer users including pupils, teachers and the local community

Industry

Education

Websense Integration

Websense Web Security

“Websense’s excellent Web filtering, reporting capabilities and the licensing benefits are the reasons we chose this software”

Chris Page

Technical Development Manager,
Children’s Services,
Warwickshire LEA

case study: Warwickshire Local Education Authority (LEA)

Warwickshire County Council safeguards its pupils’ online learning environment with Websense

Overview

Warwickshire County Council’s Local Education Authority has a statutory responsibility to cater for the educational needs of children in 248 schools in the county. This includes 139 primary and 36 secondary schools, located from Nuneaton in the North, to Stratford in the West and Shipston on Stour in the South.

That responsibility also covers the need, at the request of the government in 2006, to provide effective Internet monitoring and filtering to protect networks from security threats and prevent school children coming into contact with online predators.

The management of this secure environment is provided by Warwickshire Local Education Authority’s (LEA) ICT Development Service, which oversees the development, delivery and management of information and communications technology for around 80,000 computer users, including pupils, teachers and the local community.

The Problem

Acting as an essential education tool, the provision of Internet to primary and secondary schools in the County of Warwickshire is crucial. Warwickshire LEA is responsible for providing an interactive learning environment while securing the Web to protect its 248 schools from Internet misuse and security threats, and to safeguard against unwanted online criminal activities.

Meeting its duty of care and supporting the government’s Every Child Matters Agenda, which recognises the need for a shared sense of responsibility of government agencies to safeguarding children and protecting them from harm, had increasingly become a challenge for Warwickshire LEA.

To fully protect its 80,000 users, Warwickshire LEA needed to not only filter inappropriate Web sites but to also defend against harmful malware being inadvertently downloaded across the network. In addition, with varied user groups and learning needs, it required full flexibility and the ability to delegate responsibility of Internet policies to individual schools yet still maintain central control through its ICT Development Service.

The Solution

As part of a robust, centralised solution, Warwickshire LEA’s ICT Development Service uses Websense to monitor and manage access to these Web pages as well as prevent access to blacklisted Web sites which contain inappropriate content or that are proxy sites which technology-savvy pupils could try and use in an attempt to navigate around any restrictions.

“The children are so well networked themselves, they learn things from each other about how to try and get around Web access by using proxies. Websense identifies, categorises and filters the thousands of proxy sites and it has automatically given us a whole new level of protection,” says Chris Page, Technical Development Manager, Children’s Services, Warwickshire LEA.

Page also explains that previous centralised management was not sufficient and meant that flexibility in their choice of Web Security software was essential. Websense enabled the IT team to delegate administration and responsibility for Web use policies out to each school site, while continuing to ensure secure Internet access centrally.

“This was a very important consideration for our secondary schools, so that Web policies could be tailored to meet the specific educational needs of students at any one time. For example, if a school 6th form is doing a music project, they may want to give pupils access to music sites for the duration of that assignment. Typically, a school might limit access to music sites as they often contain downloads which are susceptible to security threats such as viruses.”

Challenge

Protect pupils and teachers from Internet threats

Solution

Websense Web Security

Benefits

Centralised solution, real-time security, flexible policy control

About Websense

Websense, Inc. (NASDAQ: WBSN) Websense, the global leader in integrated Web, messaging, and data security, enables its customers' success by protecting essential information in the Web 2.0 world. Only Websense solutions provide complete visibility and control over who may use Web, email, or information resources; what information must be protected; how information can be exchanged; and where users and information can go on the Internet. Websense keeps employees productive on any network, anytime and anywhere, to help businesses realize the full potential of constant connectivity while minimizing the risks of data leaks due to human error and malicious attacks. Websense is Essential Information Protection™.

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Integration with its current systems was also an important consideration for Warwickshire LEA when deciding on its Web Security solution. Websense content filtering works in combination with its Microsoft ISA server, which gives Web administrators alerting and monitoring capabilities, and Policy Central Enterprise (PCE), a package that monitors input and output at the computer user level was a must.

Websense sits layered across the network, and easily integrates with both standard and non standard technologies. Such an approach means Warwickshire can operate an effective tripartite solution able to track an instance of a child who exhibits warning signs of a problem, such as writing an essay about having to deal with being bullied, or monitoring any suspected instances of grooming in Internet chat rooms, where even the punctuation and use of language by an adult posing as a 14 year old can be identified, their login details captured, and the appropriate authorities notified.

These 'early-warning' signals mean appropriate children's pastoral care services can be alerted at an early stage before a real problem develops.

"We can see how effective Websense is at providing intelligent Web filtering because PCE, our second line of defence, captures the screen whenever anything gets through." says Page. "When this happens we can adjust the configuration of Websense and ISA to block the current distractions and the school can also use the screen capture evidence to discuss inappropriate behaviour with pupils and their parents."

Two additional features of Websense software, attractive to Warwickshire County Council's LEA, were its powerful reporting capabilities and licensing model.

The reporting feature logs and reports details of any attempted violation, and offers appropriate functionality for headteachers to use and tailor to their own needs at each school. At the same time, as a local authority, Warwickshire has benefited from Websense's licensing model.

"It is important to us that Websense is based on and fits with industry standard components, and that the licensing regime meets our needs. This is a key criteria and the licensing model is very appropriate," says Page, "because we are not penalised for the number of installations we have. This has allowed us to provide the best "

Page also knows he can have confidence that Websense has longevity in the marketplace.

"I had a bad experience when looking at streaming media products. We went through a pilot phase, and then found that the supplier whose product we were planning to use was withdrawing it from the market. There are many security vendors in the market and I need to know that our vendor will still be around in a few years time. This consideration, together with Websense's excellent Web filtering, reporting capabilities, and the licensing benefits are the reasons we chose this software"

The Results

Websense Web Security has ensured that Warwickshire LEA is able to manage security of its Web users with total confidence. As a result, Page believes the Internet security solution he now has in place, is in Warwickshire pupils' best interests in keeping them safe.

"Children have access to the Web from the age of 4, and they are constantly at risk online: risk from viewing inappropriate material or in these days of online communication and social networks, of coming into contact with people they shouldn't."

"The system we have of which Websense is a key element, places no burdens on individual primary or secondary schools. By deploying one system exclusively, we have benefited from the bulk purchasing power of the LEA. There is no question of having to rely on a local technician at a school because these issues are too important to be monitored by someone at an individual school. When you look at the stakes, it's frightening. Potentially a child could be damaged and it's our duty to protect against security threats."

"Part of that is due to delivering a working system that is flexible and supports what schools are trying to do online, including opening doors to their local community, and making it safe," says Page.

For a free evaluation of all Websense products or to view our online demos, visit www.websense.com/evaluations.